Biography vol 3.

THE CHARACTER OF CHARLES II.

King of England, &c.

d. 1685

1696

II E

KAOTEK

THE CHARACTER OF CHARLES II. King of England.

With a Short

ACCOUNT

Of his being Poyson'd.

Written by a Person of Honour.

With an Introduction exhibiting the Different Characters given him by the several different Parties of Roman Catholicks, Churchmen, and Dissenters, *&c.*

BY ANOTHER HAND.

London Printed, and are to be Sold by *Richard Baldwin*, near the *Oxford-Arms-Inn* in *Warwick-lan*, 1696.

Price 6 *d.*

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE following Character having been much taken notice of, and many Coppies of it handed about, it's hop'd that the rendring of it publick may be very acceptable. The Prince whose Character it is, was generally belov'd by the People; yet his faults both as a King and a Man,

were Universally observed, so that it can be no surprize to any one to find him both well and ill spoken of; for his Greatest Enemies will allow that he was endowed with many Princely Vertues; and the Greatest of his Friends must likewise confess that he had his Remarkable Vices. It cannot be denyed, but that in both those Respects the different Factions have been guilty of Excess, and have exceeded the Rules of Modesty, both in applauding and condemning him;

him; for every one ſpeaks of him according as they were advantag'd or endamaged by him; or according as the Humour or Intereſt of the Party which they eſpouſe inclines them.

The Roman-Catholicks, tho they cannot deny his many good offices to them, and their Church; yet they accuſe him of Cowardice and Diſſimulation, as having ſplaid faſt and looſe with them, and were therefore impatient to have his Brother on his Throne.

The

The high flown Churchmen did mightily admire him, becauſe he reſtor'd them to their ancient Dignities, and made them Lords paramount to all other Parties: ſo that they would neither ſee any of his faults when he was Alive, nor will they hear of 'em now he's Dead.

The Cavaliers were ſome of them very well pleas'd, and others of 'em as highly diſguſted with his Conduct, according as he anſwered or diſappointed their Expectations: And it was very obſervable

ſervable, that his Couſin Prince *Rupert* the Cavalier-General, with many of thoſe who had fought for his Father, did at laſt grow diſſatisfied with his Adminiſtration.

The *Tories* ador'd him for advancing the Prerogative, and giving them the aſcendant over the *Whiggs*, whom they proſecuted for their Lives, Reputations and Eſtates.

The *Whiggs*, tho many of them had a perſonal eſteem for him, were never contented with his Adminiſtration;

and Generally entertained this Character of him, That he gave himſelf up to all ſenſual Pleaſures without Controul: And was irreconcilable to any who interrupted his Luſts; that he debaucht the Nation more in its Manners than ever any other King did before him; that he ſquandred away the ancient Revenues of the Crown, which were eſteemed ſacred; and left ſuch a Debt upon it as was never before heard of. That he proſtituted his Majeſty, by being a Penſioner to *France*: And advanced

vanced the Power of that Monarch, to the endangering of the Liberties of *Europe*. That he imbroil'd his own Subjects in Inteſtine Feuds; and did ſo vitiate all publick Offices, both Sacred, Civil and Military, with Bribery and Corruption, as it will be hard to reform them. That he was ungrateful to the Nation for their Loyalty, and the incredible Sums which they powr'd upon him. That he leſſened the Reputation and ſtrength of the Kingdom; overturned the Laws,

and invaded the Properties of his Subjects.

The Diſſenters, againſt ſcarcely afford him one good word, but attribute all the Corruption of our Morals to the ill Conduct of his Reign, and his own bad Example. They charge him with advancing the Intereſt of the *Church of Rome*, and as having been an open Fautor of *Hobbiſm*, *Deiſm* and what not. They charge him alſo with the greateſt Perjuries that ever were heard of, as the breach of their ſolemn League and

Cove-

Covenant, and his Delara-
tion from *Breda*. They
complain of his having
weakned the Proteſtant In-
tereſt in the Nation, by
ſetting one party of Prote-
ſtants to deſtroy another;
and expoſing all Piety and
Serioufneſs to Ridicule; they
upbraid his Memory with his
manifold Whoredoms, which
hath ſo much infected the
Youth of the Nation, and
is attended by ſuch diſmal
Conſequences. And in ſhort,
there's ſcarcely any Party
who ſpeak moderately of
him; but do either exceed in

his

his praiſe or his diſpraiſe; and therefore there's reaſon to conceive that the following Character of him by a perſon of Honour, who had the opportunity of knowing him ſo well, and who is ſo duly qualified in all Reſpects to write it, will be very acceptable.

It is alſo to be noted that as there is a great difference amongſt Men and Parties, as to their Accounts of this Prince's Life, they are at no leſs variance as to the manner of his Death; in which moſt are agreed that there was

was ſome Fraud, tho they differ exceedingly as to the Means and Inſtruments. Some aſcribe it to the Intrigues of *France*, who as they undid the Father by a Wife, they ruin'd the Son by a Miſtreſs, and therefore alledge that *Lewis* XIV. being weary of feeding him with Penſions, and dreading his Natural Parts, if upon any diſguſt he ſhould come to unite againſt *France* with his Parliaments, he thought it his Intereſt to take him off, and make way for a Succeſſor, who, as he made

open

open profeſſion of his own Religion, would be more pliable to his Dictates.

Then as to the method of effecting it, they ſay it was thus, that the *D.——es* of *P——th* who bewitch'd him with her Amours, and had not only drain'd the ſubſtance of his Body, but likewiſe the ſubſtance of his Purſe, either of which being once brought to paſs, the Love of a St——et to her Paramour vaniſhes, ſo that having a mind to Change Gallants, or ſeeing no more hopes of former advantages, ſhe

ſhe gave him ſuch Provocatives as made him act beyond his natural ſtrength, and threw him into theſe Apoplectick Fits which carried him off.

There are others who aſcribe it to the R. C. Faction, who being angry at his having ſo frequently deceived them; and impatient till they came to a Trial of Skill for eſtabliſhing their Religion, while *Lewis* XIV. was in the height of his Power and Glory, did therefore adminiſter the Fatal Doſe, which ſent King *Charles* II. a going, and brought his

Brother to the Throne, under whoſe Auſpicious Conduct they made no doubt of reſtoring the *Church of Rome* to the full poſſeſſion of all that ſhe had formerly enjoyed in *Britain* and *Ireland*; and to make an amends to his Soul for the Injury they did his Body, they took care to have thoſe about him that ſhould perform the laſt Offices, in making him an intire Proſelyte to the Romiſh Faith. There are others who ſay, that all this was a ſham, tho [illegible] by his Brother, and [illegible]her unexceptionable Evi-

Evidence the *Strong-Box*; and that all the time which they pretended to ſpend in taking care of his Soul was really taken up in Cheating the Nation of their Money, by Sealing a Leaſe of the Cuſtoms; that ſo they might be enjoyed by his Succeſſor after his Death, whereas the Parliament had only ſettled them upon himſelf during Life. This is what is thought fit to be ſaid by way of Preface to the Character of a Prince, concerning whoſe Life, Reli-

gion and Death there are ſo many various ſentiments.

It's true that there are ſome who would excuſe his Brother from having any acceſſion to his death, there's none who have any reaſon to doubt that if he came to an untimely end, it was by the Hands of the Papiſts, for the high *Church of England-men* they had no reaſon to be weary of his Grovernment, nor ground to expect the like favours from his Brother that they receiv'd from him. As to the State Whiggs or Excluſioners, it

was

was not their Intereſt neither, for they had no reaſon to think that ever they ſhould enter into his Brothers reſt as the late King himſelf is ſaid to have expreſt it to ſome of that Party, who attended him upon his Coming to the Throne: Nor were they in a Condition to have favour'd *Monmouth*'s Title at the time of King *Charles* his Death, as appear'd by that unfortunate Gentleman's deplorable fate when he put in ſo boldly for his Father's Crown, ſo that Malice it ſelf cannot

faſten

faſten it on the Whiggs as having cut him off to make way for *Monmouth.*

Then for the Proteſtant Diſſenters, they had no Acceſs to his Court nor perſon and were under the leaſt tentation of any Party to wiſh for his death, ſeeing they knew the D. of *York* to be their Irreconcileable Enemy, and always the greateſt promoter of their perſecution, except when the Intereſt of his own Party perſwaded him to moderation.

There's no doubt but this Introduction will be as variouſly

ouſly cenſured as there are Variety of Factions, but ſeeing every body takes the liberty to think and ſpeak of the two Princes who are the Subject of theſe few Sheets, according as their Intereſt and Inclination leads them, it's but reaſonable that they ſhould allow others the ſame privilege with themſelves; and if they have better reaſons for the Negative than are here laid down for the Affirmative, they have the ſame liberty of making them known to the World, and thus they are left to the peruſal

uſal of what follows, which is enough to ſatisfie them that the Author is no biggot in the matter, ſeeing he does as willingly publiſh the Character drawn by others, as that which is drawn by himſelf.

A

Short Character

OF

CHARLES II.

King of England.

Setting forth his untimely Death.

I Have pitched on this Character of King *Charles* the II. not for his being a King, or my having had the Honour to ſerve him. The firſt of theſe would be too vulgar a conſideration, and the

other too particular: but I think it a Theme of Great Variety, and whatever is wanting in the Writer, may, I hope, be Recompenced, in the agreeableneſs of the Subject, which is ſometimes enough to recommend a Picture (tho' ill drawn) and to make a face one likes oftner look'd on, than the beſt Peice of *Raphael*.

To begin then according to Cuſtom with his Religion, which ſince his death hath made ſo much noiſe in the World, I yet dare confidently affirm it to be only that which is Vulgarly (tho' unjuſtly) counted none at all, I mean Deiſm. And this uncommon Opinion he owed more to the Livelineſs of his parts, and careleſsneſs of his Temper, than either to reading or much conſideration;

for

for his quickneſs of Apprehenſion at firſt View could diſcern thro' the ſeveral Cheats of Pious pretences, and his natural Lazineſs confirm'd him in an equal miſtruſt of them all, for fear he ſhould be troubled with Examining which was beſt.

If in his early Travels, and late deſigns, he ſeem'd a little Byaſſed to one ſort of Religion; The firſt is only to be imputed to a certain eaſineſs of Temper, and a Complaiſance for that Company he was then forced to keep; and the laſt was no more than his being tired (which he ſoon was in any difficulty) with thoſe bold oppoſitions in Parliament, which made him almoſt throw himſelf into the Arms of a Roman Catholick party, ſo Remarkable of late for their Loyalty, who imbraced him gladly,

and lull'd him asleep with those Enchanting Songs of Soveraignty, which the best and wisest of Princes are often unable to resist.

And tho engaged himself on that side more fully at a time, when 'tis in vain, and too late to dissemble, we ought less to wonder at it, than to consider, that our very Judgements are apt to grow in time as partial as our affections; And thus by accident only, he became of their Opinion in his weakness, who had so much endeavoured always to contribute to his Power.

He loved ease and quiet, to which his unnecessary Wars, are so far from being a Contradiction, that they are rather proof of it, since they were made only to comply with those persons,

ſons, whoſe diſaffections would have proved more uneaſy to one of his humour, than all that diſtant noiſe of Cannon which he would often liſten to, with a great deal of Tranquility. Beſides the great and almoſt only pleaſure of mind, he appears addicted to, was Shipping and Sea affairs, which ſeemed to be ſo much his Talent both for knowledge, as well as inclination, that a War of that Kind, was rather an Entertainment, than any Diſturbance to his thoughts.

If he did not go himſelf at the head of ſo magnificent a Fleet, 'tis only to be imputed to that eagerneſs of Military Glory, in his Brother, which under the ſhow of a decent care for preſerving the Royal perſon from danger, ingroſſed all that ſort of honour to himſelf, with as much jealouſie

jealouſie of any others interpoſing in it, as a King of another Temper would have had of his. 'Tis certain no Prince was ever more fitted by nature for his Countries intereſt than he was, in all his Maritime Inclinations, which might have proved of ſufficient advantage to this Nation, if he had been as carefull in depreſſing all ſuch improvements in *France*, as of advancing and encouraging our own; but it ſeems he wanted jealouſy in all his inclinations; which leads us to conſider him in his Pleaſures.

Where he was rather Abandoned than Luxurious, and like our Female Libertines, apter to be perſwaded into Debauches for the ſatisfaction of others, than to ſeek with choice where moſt to pleaſe himſelf;

I am

I am of Opinion alſo, that in his latter times there was as much of Lazineſs, as of Love, in all thoſe hours he paſſed among his Miſtreſſes, who after all only ſerved to fill up his *Seraglio*, while a bewitching kind of pleaſure called Sauntring, and talking without any conſtraint, was the true Sultana Queen he Delighted in.

He was ſurely inclined to juſtice, for nothing elſe would have retained him ſo faſt to the ſucceſſion of a Brother againſt a Son he was ſo fond of. And the humour of a Party which he ſo much feared, I am willing alſo to impute to his Juſtice, whatever ſeems in ſome meaſure to contradict the general Opinion of his Clemency, as his ſuffering always the Rigor of the Law, to proceed not only a-

gainſt

gainſt all Highwaymen, but alſo ſeveral others, in whoſe Caſes the Lawyers, according to their wonted cuſtom, had uſed ſometimes a great deal of Hardſhip and Severity.

His underſtanding was quick and lively, in little things, and ſometimes would ſoare high enough in great ones, but unable to keep it up, with any long attention or application; witty in all ſorts of Converſation, and telling a ſtory ſo well, that not out of flattery, (but for the pleaſure of hearing it) we uſed to ſeem ignorant of what he had repeated to us ten times before, as a good Comedy will bear the being often ſeen.

Of

Of a wonderfull mixture, losing all his time, and setting his whole heart on the Fair Sex, yet neither Angry with Rivals, nor in the least Nice as to the being beloved, and while he sacrificed all things to his Mistresses, he would use to grudge, and be uneasie at their losing a little of it again at Play, tho' never so necessary for their diversion, nor would he Venture 5 *l.* at Tennis to those Servants who might obtain as many thousands, either before he came thither, or as soon as he left of.

Full of Dissimulation, and very *adroit* at it, yet no man easier to be imposed on, for his great dexterity was in cozening himself, by gaining a little one way, while it cost him ten

times as much another, and by Caresling those persons most, who had deluded him the oftnest, and yet the quickest in the world at Spying such a Ridicule in another.

Easy and good natured to all people in trifles, but in greater affairs severe, and inflexible, in one weeks absence, quite forgeting those Servants to whose faces he could hardly deny any thing.

In the midst of all his Remissness so industrious, and indefatigable on some particular occasions, that no man would either toil longer, or be able to manage it better.

He was so Liberal as to Ruine his affairs by it, for want in a K. of

of *England* turns things just upside down, and Expoſes a Prince to his peoples mercy, it did yet worſe in him, for it forced him alſo to depend on his great Neighbour of *France*, who played the Broker with him ſufficiently, in all thoſe times of Extremity, yet this profuſeneſs of his did not ſo much proceed from his over valuing thoſe he favoured, as from his undervaluing any ſumms of Money, which he did not ſee, tho' he found his Error in this, but I confeſs a little of the lateſt.

He had ſo natural an Averſion to all formality, that with as much Wit as moſt men ever had, and as Majeſtick a Mien, yet he could not on premeditation act the Part of a King for a moment

ment, either at Parliament or Council, either in Words or Gesture, which carried him into the other Extream, more inconvenient of the two, of letting all Distinction and Ceremony fall to the Ground, as useless and foppish.

His Temper both of Body and Mind was Admirable, which made him an easie generous Lover; A Civil obliging Husband, a Friendly Brother, an Indulgent Father, and a good natured Master. If he had been as Solicitous about improving the faculties of his mind, as he was in the Management of his bodily health, (tho' alas 'tis proved unable to make his life long) that had not failed to have made it Famous.

He was an illustrious Exception,

to

to all the Common Rules of Physiognomy, for with a most Saturnine harsh sort of Countenance he was both of a Merry and Mercifull Disposition, and in the last 30. years of his life, as Fortunate as those of his Fathers had been Dismal and tumultuous. If his Death had some appearance of being untimely, it may be Partly imputed to his Extream, healthy constitution, which made the world as much surprized at his dying before threescore, as if nothing but an ill accident could have Killed him.

I would not say any thing on so sad a Subject; If I did not think silence it self in such a Case, would signifie too much; And therefore as an Impartial Writer, I am oblig'd to Observe, that I am assured, the most

and most deserving of all the Physicians did not only believe him, Poysoned, but thought himself so too, not long after, for having Declared his Opinion a little too boldly.

FINIS.